

# **ETHICAL ANALYSIS IN ORGANIZATIONAL DECISION MAKING**

## **EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT**

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An applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy

As part of the Executive Fire Officer Program

August 2002

## **ABSTRACT**

Every decision has ethical implications. Under normal conditions the ethical component is usually not the determining factor. However, when decisions must be made under stress and with limited information, willingness to accept a decision and work to implement it may well rest on the perception of whether the decision was ethical. The anthrax attacks were one of those situations. The Montpelier Fire / Ambulance Department (MFD) had to make decisions how to respond and some moral dilemmas arose while trying to balance limited resources with the competing needs, goals, and concerns of the different groups involved. Failure to properly deal with those moral dilemmas could have had serious consequences.

The problem was that the MFD did not have an organizational system to evaluate decisions from an ethical perspective and provide guidance on making ethical decisions. The purpose of this report was to design an ethics based evaluation system to assist the MFD in making better decisions by identifying potential ethical problems and providing guidance on making ethical decisions.

The research method for this study was a combination of Evaluative and Action. The Evaluative portion answered three research questions.

1. Do basic ethical principles exist which should be included in an ethics based evaluation system?
2. Are any practical tools available for applying ethical theory?
3. How is the fire service currently dealing with ethical issues?

The Action portion developed a tool, the Ethical Assessment Form, to guide the decision making process.

The procedure involved an extensive literature review followed by the form development. Research was done on ethical theory, applied ethics, and recent fire service research. Relevant information was used to create the Ethical Assessment Form.

The results can be summarized as follows. Ethical principles were identified and tools for applying ethical theory were found. The Ethical Assessment Form was developed from those principles and tools. The fire service regarded ethics as important, but there was no consensus on how to integrate ethics into the fire service. One limitation found was that both ethical theory and the fire service are concerned primarily with the individual and assume that ethical people naturally make ethical organizations.

Three recommendations were made. One was that the MFD use the Ethical Assessment Form to guide the decision making process for all policy level decisions. The second was that the department provides basic education on ethical theory to its members. The last was that follow-up research be done on organizational decision making.

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## INTRODUCTION

Fire service leaders make decisions to solve problems. These decisions affect the lives of people. Every decision that affects people has ethical implications (Josephson Institute, 2001). These ethical implications impact how the people affected view a decision and help determine whether they will accept the decision and work towards successful implementation or reject it and work against it. People involved in an issue can have different ethical views of it because moral issues are interwoven with our personal core values and beliefs (Josephson Institute, 2001). However, not every component of a problem involves ethical decisions (Bivins, 2000). Common ground and understanding among different groups can come from long standing relationships, shared knowledge, common experiences, and cultural unity. In normal circumstances that common ground and understanding goes far in overcoming difficulties the different groups involved have with a decision.

When the new, unexpected, or different appears, much of that common ground and understanding can be eroded. Ethical issues become more crucial until new knowledge and experiences restore the common ground and understanding. Faced with unknown situations, willingness to accept a decision can depend on whether the decision is considered ethical. The anthrax attacks in 2001 were one of those times. In October 2001 we knew that anthrax had been sent though the mail, people were dead, and serious property contamination had occurred. The nation was frightened and people turned to the emergency services for help and assurance.

The Montpelier Fire / Ambulance Department (MFD) in Montpelier, Vermont, along with every other fire department across the nation, suddenly had to make decisions on how to respond. What should we do? What could we do? What would we do? Three simple questions,

but the answers were crucial. Getting the answers to those questions to coincide was the challenge. Unfortunately, too often the answers did not coincide. There was not enough information, there were not enough resources, and there were too many groups, each with their own needs, goals, and concerns. Those needs, goals, and concerns were often conflicting or competing. Moral dilemmas were created as decisions asked different groups involved to assume the risk created by the gap between what we should, could, and would do.

This study developed from my personal involvement as one of those decision makers. I was acutely aware of my own uncomfortable feelings about the risks we were asking people to take. I feel we avoided unethical decisions. However, I was frustrated by a feeling that we were not fully addressing dilemmas. It was only when I attended a National Fire Academy class the following February that I began to understand the basic problem. The problem is that the MFD does not have an organizational system to evaluate decisions from an ethical perspective and provide guidance on making ethical decisions. The purpose of this report is to design an ethics based evaluation system that will assist the MFD in making better decisions by identifying potential ethical problems and providing guidance on making ethical decisions.

The research method for this study is a combination of Evaluative and Action. The Evaluative portion looks at ethical theory and how it relates to the fire service. The Action portion develops a tool, the Ethical Assessment Form, which the fire service can utilize to evaluate decisions for potential ethical problems.

Three Research Questions need to be answered.

1. Do basic ethical principles exist which should be included in an ethics based evaluation system?

2. Are any practical tools available for applying ethical theory?
3. How is the fire service currently dealing with ethical issues?

### **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The MFD is responsible to many different groups, both in and out of the department. These groups each have some claim on the department and its resources. One of the functions of the department management is to properly address those claims and allocate the resources accordingly.

The MFD is responsible for providing certain services to the public. Some of these are specifically required by law. In Vermont a fire department is responsible in case of fire or hazardous substance incident and in case of imminent threat of fire, explosion, or hazardous substance incident (“Powers and duties”, 1999). The community also requests other services. Emergency Medical Care, ambulance transport, chimney cleaning equipment, CPR training, school fire safety programs, voluntary home inspections, responses for non fire rescues, and responses for general assistance are examples of those services. Almost all services provided are regulated in some manner by State and Federal agencies and the department is responsible for acting in accordance with their rules and regulations.

The MFD provides these services through the people it employs. The department is responsible for providing these employees with the means to perform those functions and, at the same time, for providing them with a safe working environment. In addition, it is hoped that the MFD provides them with a meaningful life experience in this public service.

The MFD is responsible to people, as individuals and as members of groups. Many people belong in more than one group at the same time. The department provides service to

individuals in the community while operating under the general policy direction and within the budget constraints of the City Council. The Fire Chief personally works directly for the City Manager. The MFD itself is made up of internal groups who often have overlapping membership. Union and non union; officers and firefighters; full time, part time, and call personnel: these are just three ways to view the department.

An evaluation of these responsibilities reveals considerable possibility for conflict. The MFD makes decisions, often under very stressful conditions, which affect these people. When a decision is made a number of difficult situations can arise. Sometimes people strongly disagree with the decision, sometimes mistakes are made, sometimes people suffer a loss (this loss may be real or only perceived), sometimes one group bears the cost of a decision while others receive the benefits, and sometimes an affected group is unaware of a change that affects them until something happens. When one of these occurs and the reasons are not clearly understood, the question of unethical behavior may arise.

The MFD has had its share of these experiences over the years. Some of the issues faced include conflicts between the union and administration, changes in the way service is provided in order to meet State and Federal requirements, increased costs placed on the taxpayers, and new requirements for employee safety. There have been difficult times, including feelings that unethical behavior occurred. However, in the balance of things, these difficulties, while real, did not dominate the process. There was enough common ground and understanding between the different groups to allow the overall system to function well.

Then anthrax went through the mail. Before that time it had been a scare tactic used by certain domestic groups; now it was a reality that killed people. The MFD had to make decisions



on how to respond while trying to meet its responsibilities to all the groups involved. Dilemmas occurred when situations arose where meeting the needs of one group placed a burden on another group.

One example of a dilemma concerned response to possible anthrax incidents. The MFD considered an anthrax scare to be a hazardous materials incident. The response to a hazardous materials incident is governed by Occupational Safety and Health regulations (Hazardous waste operations and emergency response, 1992). The basic principle is that safety requires specialized training before entering an area that may be hazardous. Hazmat teams have the trained personnel and equipment to enter and work in an area that has a possible hazardous. Others are trained only to perform work outside a possible hazardous area and are not allowed to enter. MFD firefighters, like most firefighters, fall into the second category.

A hazmat team is very expensive in equipment, training, and personnel. The MFD is a small fire department and does not have the resources to maintain a hazmat team. In fact, no community in Vermont is able to do that. For that reason the State of Vermont recently set up a statewide hazmat team. This is a part-time team, composed of members who also belong to other emergency services, which is called together to deal with serious incidents anywhere in the state. After the anthrax scares started, the State Hazmat Team was run ragged responding to all the calls for help.

The State Hazmat Team asked fire departments to help them out by doing a preliminary reconnaissance of any suspicious packages or letters. They made their request on several assumptions. These were that there was an extremely low probability of a real anthrax incident, that firefighters could safely identify a threat, and that firefighters could be adequately protected

by *turnout gear* (see Definitions section).

The dilemma in this case was whether it was right to allow the risk to MFD firefighters to increase. There were more questions than answers. Was there an absolute risk level, which must never be exceeded? Was it acceptable to increase risk if there was an adequate reason to do so? What if the assumptions were wrong and serious harm occurred? What if the anthrax was not readily identifiable? What if there was a different agent involved? What if anthrax proved to be more serious than it was first assumed to be? Was the request of the State Hazmat Team contrary to the spirit if not the letter of federal law? Would protecting firefighters put others at greater risk? There were too many questions and too few answers.

Similar dilemmas arose in other situations relating to anthrax. In each case the decision making process was complicated by the nature of the threat, the lack of knowledge about the threat, the limited resources available, and the conflicting needs of different groups. The sheer number of complicating factors, combined with the real possibility of catastrophic failure, made decision making especially difficult.

As second in command in the MFD, I was one of the decision makers involved. Very early on I decided that my personal priorities would be the safety of the firefighters and the security of department resources. This was out of concern for the employees as people, but also because the loss of people and equipment would jeopardize any chance to provide any service. More than once this stand placed me in conflict with others who had different perspectives and objectives.

It was a very frustrating time, personally and professionally. I felt that many decisions just compromised a little too much or failed to understand the potential for disaster. It was

difficult to accept decisions I felt were borderline, while other people seemed to have no problem accepting them. Sometimes the frustration was because I felt the department was not being properly protected, other times because I felt that properly protecting my department was asking others to take a larger risk. I suspected that others were also frustrated with me and my recommendations.

This feeling of frustration continued until the National Fire Academy's Executive Development course in February 2002. One section of the course covers ethics. That brief overview of just a few ethical theories provided insight into both the source of the frustration and the possible solution. The frustration was caused by people, me included, basing opinions and actions on one ethical viewpoint while being unaware of other ethical viewpoints. The solution could be found by evaluating decisions from different ethical points of view and identifying the ethical position finally selected. If this ethical evaluation was integrated into the organizational culture, the department would have greater resiliency to deal with new and unexpected problems. This solution would be valuable both for making future decisions as well as evaluating past decisions. One of the reasons that past decisions in the MFD were controversial was a failure to understand the ethical point of view taken by the different persons and groups involved.

Research into the application of ethical theories will support the implementation of the USFA operational objective that calls for the fire service organization to lead the development of a comprehensive, multi-hazard risk reduction plan within the community. This research will provide a tool the fire service can use to make better decisions. Well planned and documented decisions will be better understood and supported by the whole community.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The problem needs an extensive literature review. Making recommendations in a field as old and complicated as ethics requires a solid foundation of basic knowledge. That basic knowledge is then used to review alternative methods of applying ethical theories and current ethical issues in the fire service. The literature review is organized around each of the research questions.

The first research question asks if basic ethical principles exist which should be included in an ethics based evaluation system. Two recent texts on ethics and morality are used. They are reviewed and compared to determine current understanding of ethical theories.

Pojman in *Ethics: Discovering Right and Wrong* (1999) writes about ethical theories. He provides several definitions. *Morality* and *morals* refer to the actual customs, precepts, and practices an individual or culture uses to determine how a person ought to act. *Moral philosophy* refers to philosophical or theoretical reflection on morality. *Ethical theories* are specific moral theories issuing from philosophical reflection. *Ethics* refers to the whole domain of morality and moral philosophy (p. 2). Pojman's work can be summarized in four general themes.

The first theme is that ethics is an important part of life. Morality is one of several practical institutions that guide our actions. Three others are religion, etiquette, and law. Morality differs from each of these. In particular, morality differs from law by going deeper into the essence of our social existence. Moral philosophy has a central purpose "to secure valid principles of conduct and values that can guide human actions and produce good character" (Pojman, 1999, p.7). Ethical theories focus on the individual person, but are intended to allow the community to flourish. "The goal of morality is to create happy and virtuous people, the kind

that create flourishing communities” (p. 19). A core of moral principles exists that are universally valid. “Reason can discover the correct principles, and it is in our interest to promote them” (p. 58). Acting according to those principles will allow individuals and society to flourish.

The second theme is that ethical analysis is complicated. Ethics is more than just evaluating actions based on rules of conduct. There are four major *domains* that can be considered. These domains are the *act*, the *consequences*, the *character* of the person, and the *motive*. The act is what a person does. Lying and telling the truth are examples of acts. The consequence is what happens because of the act. Getting someone in trouble is a consequence. The consequence does not depend on the act. For example, depending on the situation, you could either lie or tell the truth to get someone in trouble. The character of the person is concerned with qualities, good or bad, that are attributed to the person. The motive is concerned with what the person intends to happen. Ethical theories attempt to define moral principles to guide conduct. Different ethical theories concentrate on one, or maybe two, of those domains as more important than the others.

The third theme is that two major types of ethical systems have dominated modern thought concerning ethics. One is where the focus is on the act and the other is where the focus is on the consequences. The first type of ethical system attaches intrinsic value to the act itself and attempts to define ethical acts. Immanuel Kant’s ethics is the major form of this ethical system and says that ethical acts should be done regardless of consequences. Kant’s ethical system has three basic tenants: by reason a person can discover universal laws of conduct, people are never treated merely as a means, and every rational being is able to determine the universal laws of conduct. The second type of ethical system says that the right act is the one which produces the

greatest amount of good. Utilitarianism is the dominant version of this ethical system.

Utilitarianism “calls for the maximization of goodness in society, that is, the greatest goodness for the greatest number” (Pojman, 1999, p. 107). In addition, there is a third type of ethical system, virtue-based ethics. This is one of the oldest theories. “In Aristotle’s classic work on the virtues, written more than three centuries before Christ, the virtues are simply those characteristics that enable individuals to live well in communities” (pp. 163-164). Virtue ethics has reemerged as a major ethical theory because of dissatisfaction with the other two ethical systems.

The fourth theme is that while each system has validity, something is lacking in each. Kant’s and similar systems have the problem that good results do not necessarily result from good acts. These systems “seem right in their emphasis on the importance of rules and the principle of justice but tend to become rigid or to lose focus on the central purposes of morality” (Pojman, 1999, p. 152). Most people would have a problem with an absolute rule to tell the truth when telling the truth would harm an innocent person. “Utilitarianism seems to catch the spirit of morality (human flourishing and the amelioration of suffering) but undercuts justice in a way that is counterintuitive” (p. 152). For most people the end doesn’t justify the means when the means is to trample basic human rights and dignity. Virtue ethics tells us what type of person we should be, but does not help us to decide what to do. This is especially of concern when we have to resolve ethical dilemmas. “In sum, virtue ethics has a problem of application: It doesn’t tell us what to do in particular instances in which we most need direction” (p. 168). These four basic themes concerning ethics are supported by the second source used.

Holmes in *Basic Moral Philosophy* (1993) writes about moral philosophy as a portion of

the larger field of ethics. While organized differently, Holmes supports the basic theory presented by Pojman. The information Holmes provides can be summarized in three general themes.

The first theme is that moral philosophy is very important but has limitations. “Although moral philosophy cannot promise to resolve your moral problems for you, it can help guide you in efforts to resolve those problems, and in deliberations about what constitutes the wise conduct of life. And virtually nothing is of greater importance” (Holmes, 1993, p. 3)

The second theme is that moral philosophy has developed over the centuries and in some ways this development is circular. Ancient ethics was concerned more with virtue ethics, concentrating on the qualities of the person rather than conduct. Modern moral philosophy changed that emphasis. Conduct rather than character became most important. Conduct was concerned with the act and/or the consequences. The legalistic approach became dominant. This approach says that there are basic moral principles and/or rules. An ethical problem is resolved by identifying the particular rule to apply. However, contemporary philosophers have begun to reconsider the importance of virtue. “As a result, the ethics of conduct and the ethics of virtue, have in many ways, become competing outlooks. The ethics of conduct remains the dominant orientation, but the ethics of virtue is receiving increasing attention” (Holmes, 1993, p. 59).

The third theme is that no ethical theory is completely satisfying. In virtue ethics the problem is how a person develops virtues. “Virtue does not just mysteriously spring up in some people. It is not innate” (Holmes, 1993, p. 80). People have to do something to develop the virtues. The process to learn to be virtuous must start with morally right conduct. Ethics of conduct theories, which stress the importance of either the act or the consequences, also have basic problems. Kant’s theory is concerned with selecting the morally correct act, trying to carry

it out, and doing it because it is right. One major objection to the theory is that consequences are not considered. “What the actual consequences would be if we performed certain actions does not enter into the process by which we determine rightness at all” (p. 149). Utilitarianism is the major theory that stresses the consequences. The ethical person selects the action that will do the most good for the most people. The act itself has no value apart from the consequences. Three areas of concern with utilitarianism are:

(1) the moral relevance of such acts as truth telling and promise keeping even when they do not maximize value; (2) rights such as freedom of expression and the right to life, which sometimes seem to conflict with utility; (3) justice, which may sometimes run counter to what promotes the greatest good. (p. 160)

Most of the ethics of conduct are legalistic, concerned with discovering principles and/or rules to be followed. The problem that develops is that even if some principle and/or set of rules could be shown to be justified, “there would remain the practical problem of knowing both when they apply to a particular situation and precisely what they prescribe for that situation” (p. 202). If you have a general principle, love your neighbor for instance, you still have to figure out how to apply it. If you have a lot of specific rules, you need to be sure that you choose the right rule. This can be difficult when the rules seem to contradict each other under specific circumstances.

This review of basic ethical theory finds no agreement on one ethical theory. The different theories all have strengths in some situations and definite weaknesses in others. The best ethical resolution of a situation may be in finding a method which combines aspects of different theories. This approach is supported by the practical applications studied in the next question.



The second research question asks if any practical tools are available for applying ethical theory. A search of Internet sources found three sites with information directly related to the question. They provide different approaches to solving ethical problems.

Bivins (2000) has developed his *Ethical Worksheet* and *Commentary on the Ethical Worksheet* for use in a course on Mass Media Ethics. The worksheet (see Appendix A) is designed to help students work through ethical issues. The worksheet follows a basic format of defining the ethical problem, selecting the alternatives, and evaluating alternatives. The worksheet assumes that there is an ethical issue. It is important to clearly define the problem. This involves identifying the specific issue, collecting facts on the issue, and listing all claimants affected by the issue. Solving an ethical issue requires having at least three alternative courses of action. In his worksheet commentary on the alternative courses of action Bivins states:

It is extremely important to list at least three. As Aristotle noted, there are always at least two, and these two often represent the extremes. Nothing is either black or white, and you must be forced to think in terms of compromise, even if that compromise doesn't exactly conform with your personal notion of what is the right thing to do. (Commentary).

The worksheet then requires that all alternatives be evaluated. Part of this evaluation is done following ethical guidelines. These guidelines, in the form of questions, require the consequences of the action and the action itself to be evaluated from totally different perspectives, often exposing conflict between the theories. Forcing the person to view the issue from so many angles makes it difficult to maintain a fixed position on the issue. "The goal of this worksheet is to provide you with the tools you need to assess ethical dilemmas and to reason through them. There are no right answers, only well-reasoned answers" (Commentary).

A similar approach is found in Ethos System<sup>®</sup>, a computer program developed by Taknosys Software Corporation. It provides an algorithm for analyzing and solving ethical problems. The system is designed to lead a person through a specific process of defining the problem and then analyzing it. The problem definition includes identifying the persons, facts, and the issues involved. The analysis then takes alternatives and tests them against six different ethical theories. Three of the theories deal with utility. They test the consequences of the alternatives. The other three theories are called respect for persons analysis. They test the effects of the alternatives on the persons involved. The key benefits of the system are listed as a consistent approach to problem solving, rational decisions evolve from the analysis, and it provides a complete tracking of the decision making process.

A different approach is taken by the Josephson Institute of Ethics (2001) in the online resource entitled *Making Ethical Decisions*. There are two sections that are of particular importance to this study. One is a model for ethical decision making and the second is the steps for principled reasoning.

The section titled “Models for Ethical Decision Making” provides a decision making model that combines traditional ethical theories in a decision making hierarchy. This system works on a different principle than the two systems mentioned above. Bivins and the Ethos System<sup>®</sup> are designed to perform all the ethical analysis and then compare results. The Josephson Institute system works with one ethical theory at a time. The model has three principles. These principles are listed and used in a specific order to make a decision.

The first principle states that “all decisions must take into account and reflect a concern for the interests and well being of all stakeholders” (Josephson Institute, 2001). This principle

reflects the basic principle of the “golden rule” which is being concerned with and responsible for the well-being of others. Most ethical problems will be avoided at this level simply by helping each stakeholder and avoiding harm. Compromise is very successful at this level. Only where there are serious conflicting interests does the ethical evaluation go to the next step.

The second principle states that “ethical values and principles always take precedence over nonethical ones” (Josephson Institute, 2001). This principle reflects Kant’s concept of duty in that the decision maker has a responsibility to follow ethical principles when they conflict with nonethical values. This is an absolute rule. If the conflict is between an ethical value and a nonethical value the ethical value is always selected. Honesty, human dignity, etc, are ethical values. Power, money, property, etc, are all nonethical values. This is a difficult step to follow because people are able to rationalize that the nonethical things they want are universal ethical needs. This rationalizing must be consciously avoided. Only when there is a serious conflict between true ethical values does the evaluation go to the third step.

The third principle states that “it is ethically proper to violate an ethical principle only when it is clearly necessary to advance another true ethical principle, which, according to the decision maker’s conscience, will produce the greatest balance of good in the long run” (Josephson Institute, 2001). This principle provides a process for the decision maker to rely on when a true conflict between ethical principles and values exists. In these cases the decision maker must decide between values and should try to do the greatest good and the least harm. It is very important to avoid manipulating the system by building a rationale just to do what the decision maker originally wanted to do.

In the section titled “Five Steps to Principled Reasoning” the Josephson Institute provides

a complete outline for making and implementing decisions. The first step is to clarify. The issue to be decided must be clearly defined. Alternatives must be developed. The decision maker must force himself “to develop at least three ethically justifiable options” (Josephson Institute, 2001). The second step is to evaluate. All facts and assumptions must be carefully evaluated. All information must be considered for bias and solid facts distinguished from beliefs, desires, theories, etc. The benefits, burdens, and risks to each stakeholder must be carefully considered. The third step is to decide. Make a judgment about what is true and what the probable consequences are. Special care must be made to select between conflicting values when a true ethical dilemma occurs. The fourth step is to implement. “Once you decide what to do, develop a plan to implement the decision in a way that maximizes the benefits and minimizes the costs and risks” (Josephson Institute, 2001). Improper implementation can weaken any decision or act. The fifth step is to monitor and modify. “Since most decisions are based on imperfect information and ‘best effort’ predictions, it is inevitable that some will be wrong” (Josephson Institute, 2001). When a decision produces unforeseen bad consequences and/or does not produce the results anticipated, adjustments must be made.

This review of current practical tools for ethical analysis and decision making finds a common understanding that no one ethical theory can adequately analyze a situation. The best decisions are made by rational analysis using multiple theories to consider different aspects of an issue. This is consistent with the review of basic ethical theory.

The third research question asks how the fire service is currently dealing with ethical issues. This question is researched by reviewing Executive Fire Officer Program (EFOP) papers dealing with ethics and reviewing current periodicals for relevant articles.

The abstracts of 17 current (1998 and later) EFOP papers were reviewed to determine the specific ethical problems that are being addressed in the fire service. Fourteen reports (Anderson, 1999; Drumm, 2000; French, 1999; Glass, 1999; Hanger, 2000; Howes, 1998; Intile, 1999; Moran, 1998; Richards, 1998; Sharp, 1998; Swayze, 1998; White, 1998; Wolford, 1998; Zito, 1998) are directly concerned with developing a code of conduct for personnel and/or personal development through training. Three reports had more specific purposes. Ayers (1998) deals with the specific issue of communicable diseases. Wright (2001) is concerned with generational differences between fire department leadership and rank and file. Perry (2001) evaluates a fictional fire service book for use in leadership training.

Glass (1999) is concerned that fire department members come from a variety of backgrounds. He feels that not having a written code of ethics is the problem because ethical decisions are made daily. "The lack of such a document weakens members skills in making these types of decisions" (p. 4). His conclusion is that the fire service has a history of effectively operating in emergency situations using standard operating procedures and guidelines. "The same acceptable results would occur if written standards of ethics were adopted" (p. 18).

Sharp (1998) says, "The problem is that there is not a document that calls for TFD members to conform to a higher standard and guides the actions of the members of the TFD when it comes to making decisions not covered by law, ordinance, rule or procedure" (p. 1). His recommendation is the adoption of a pledge of commitment. This pledge is a list of values the firefighter is expected to conform to. The pledge would be a code of guidelines and "it would not be the intent to make people ethical, but to assist them in making good choices" (p. 13).

French (1999) says that the problem is training that "does not address moral or ethical

character development for individuals” (p. 7). He concludes that “The most positive benefit would be realized during routine times of daily activities” (p. 32). He recommends adoption of a commercially available program. This program is based on developing character traits.

Moran (1998) says the problem is not having “a written, stand alone document that provides ethical guidance to its members” (p. 5). He feels it “necessary to sternly advise management staff to review their own ethical compass to be sure that it is in congruence with that of the organization” (p. 20). He considers ethics to be an individual endeavor. “An organization is made up of individuals. If all individual members of the organization are committed to the project and follow and practice these guidelines, future decisions will be based on a sound ethical standard” (p. 23).

Richard’s (1998) problem is that there is no code of ethics and that may impact on the department’s ability to “maintain a high level of public trust” (p. 5). His survey found that “even departments without written codes of ethics feel their members thing [sic] of ethics when making decisions 76%” (p.17). His draft code of ethics is a list of seven generalized behaviors that will be expected from employees.

Wolford (1998) also recommends development of a code of ethics. His problem is more specific, relating to problems that occurred in his department over a period of time. “The intent of the project was to uncover a means to promote ethical behavior and therefore, alter the negative perception” (p. 12). He feels a written policy is necessary. He also makes the following observation:

The literature revealed the difficulty of establishing proper conduct in some complex situations. The five critical elements of ethical conduct help simplify these situations.

Will the conduct stand the test of the light of day (honesty)? Would the conduct be fair if the situation was reversed (fairness)? Does the conduct exhibit respect for the dignity of others (respect)? Does the conduct assist others down the road of life (compassion)? Does the conduct promote community interests rather than individual gain (responsibility)? If the answers to these questions is yes, then it is probably safe to assume that the behavior is acceptable. (p. 14)

Ayers (1998) deals specifically with communicable diseases. His review of the literature and surveys finds that “research revealed that ethical guidelines are, at best, highly subjective and open to interpretation. All health care providers are bound to their patients by ethical principles of one form or another” (p. 30). He also found that legal considerations are very important in decision making and that employees have limited understanding of them. He recommends training on the specific issue of communicable diseases as well as broad-based legal and ethical training.

Peterson (2002) writes an article in *Fire Engineering* March 2002 concerning turnout gear use as protection during chemical attacks. He describes the process used by the military to evaluate the effectiveness of turnout gear. The results of that testing showed that under certain circumstances turnout gear could provide protection for certain rescue efforts. Peterson describes some of the ethical issues involved. One potential issue could arise because the fire service and the military have different philosophies concerning acceptable levels of risk for personnel. He feels that the active participation of the fire service in the testing process limits that possibility. Another issue is the concern of some hazardous materials specialists who feel the military guidance “contradicts everything they have learned from past training and it even contradicts

existing regulations, consensus standards, and responder guidelines” (p. 92). In a side-bar (Figure 2, p. 100) he summarizes the decisions of eight fire departments (including several of the nations largest) which range from fully accepting, to partially accepting, to totally rejecting the military guidelines.

The review of the EFOP papers provides an overview of how top level fire service leaders consider ethical issues. There were some important areas of agreement, but there were also important areas of difference. It is clear that, consciously or unconsciously, the writers are subscribing to certain ethical theories and basing their decisions and actions on those theories. The article concerning turnout gear as chemical protective gear provides an interesting example of organizations coming to completely different decisions based on the same information. Part of the decision making process appears to be related to ethical decisions concerning conflicting priorities of providing assistance and protecting the responders.

## **PROCEDURES**

The study needs to focus first on the Evaluative portion, using an extensive literature review. The literature review is organized around answering the individual research questions. Following the literature review it is possible to move to the Action portion of the study and develop the tool for fire department use.

The first research question asks if basic ethical principles exist which should be included in an ethics based evaluation system. Answering this question requires knowledge of ethics and ethical theories. That information is available in published materials used for educational purposes. A recent text covering ethics is used as a guide for reviewing basic ethical theory. A second text is reviewed to find any conflicting information and to provide an additional



viewpoint of major ethical issues.

The second research question asks if any practical tools are available for applying ethical theory. Answering this question requires researching for current information concerning applied ethics. Research on the Internet locates sites dealing with making ethical decisions. Three sites are selected. The first site is related to a course on journalistic ethics. The second site provides a computer system designed to help guide a person through ethical situations. The third site is a series of guidelines presented by an institute concerned with ethics.

The third research question asks how the fire service is currently dealing with ethical issues. Answering this question requires researching what fire service professionals are writing concerning ethics in the fire service. The EFOP papers are an excellent source to gain a general overview of the specific issues of concern. Recent EFOP applied research papers dealing with ethics are reviewed to get that information. A topic search on ethics is done to find EFOP papers written from 1998 on. The abstracts of these papers are reviewed to identify areas of common concern in the fire service. More detailed evaluation is made of specific EFOP papers. Following the review of EFOP papers, fire service publications are researched to find examples of ethical decisions being made in the fire service. One article dealing with turnout gear use during chemical attack situations is selected.

The research results are used to develop the Ethical Assessment Form. This author had to select which factors concerning ethical behavior should be included. These factors then had to be combined into a usable format.

The following limitations should be noted. This author researched basic ethical theory. The theory covers individual behavior and conduct. There was no specific information on

organizational ethical decision making. In developing the Ethical Assessment Form, this author extrapolated the information he felt is most relevant to organizations. In addition, the Ethical Assessment Form is not a final product. While this author feels it provides a sound foundation to build upon, it is designed to be used, reviewed after use, and modified as appropriate.

### Definitions

*Turnout gear:* Standard structural firefighting protective gear ensemble. This consists of a protective coat, protective trousers, boots, helmet, hood, gloves, and self contained breathing apparatus (SCBA).

The following terms are used as described by Pojman (1999, p. 2).

*Ethics:* The whole domain of morality and moral philosophy.

*Morality:* Used when describing or referring to certain customs, precepts, and practices of people and cultures.

*Moral Philosophy:* Refers to philosophical or theoretical reflection on morality.

*Ethical Theories:* Specific moral theories issuing from philosophical reflection.

## **RESULTS**

The literature review found information to answer the research questions. While sources were selected primarily to research a specific question, they also provided information for the other questions. Considerable agreement was found among all the sources.

The first research question asks if basic ethical principles exist which should be included in an ethics based evaluation system. No single ethical theory, with its related principles, works in all situations. The different theories each have aspects that appear to work quite well under certain conditions, but fail in others. Very often the area of strength for one theory is an area of

weakness in another. It appears that there are ethical principles that should be included in an ethics based evaluation system. The Ethical Assessment Form is based on these principles. However, those principles are not absolutes. Successful use of those principles requires an understanding of the limitations of each. A system that combines aspects of different theories has the best opportunity of identifying potential ethical problems. Successful development of a system has to take into account basic facts about ethics.

The first fact is that ethical decisions are important. Pojman (1999) considers ethics a major guide to our conduct because it goes deep into the essence of our social existence. Holmes (1993) feels that virtually nothing is more important than our ability to use moral philosophy to guide us to wise conduct. All three systems for applying ethical theory agree that better decisions are made by openly addressing the ethical aspect. The fire service writers cited all agree that ethics is very important, though they view ethics differently. The relationship of ethics to the law is important to the fire service. Most fire departments are public entities under obligation to uphold the law. Ayers (1998) brings out the importance of legal considerations, but states there is always an ethical side to the issues the fire service deals with. Law has limitations when used to guide our actions. "A limitation of law is that you can't have a law against every social malady, nor can you enforce every desirable rule" (Pojman, 1999, p. 6). Another viewpoint concerning law is that "the ethical person often chooses to do more than the law requires and less than the law allows. The ethical person is concerned with what is right to do, not with what she has a right to do" (Josephson Institute, 2001).

The second fact is that ethical analysis is complicated. Pojman (1999) states that ethical analysis covers four domains and different ethical theories emphasize one domain as being

fundamentally more important. The problem with each ethical theory is that eventually a situation occurs in which the logically right answer is obviously flawed. Always telling the truth is good until it hurts an innocent person. Improving the standard of living of many is not good if you have to enslave others to accomplish it. Changing the domain of the analysis may be needed to produce a better solution. Holmes' (1993) recognition of ethical theories changing over time supports this idea. Theories have changed precisely because each has been found in turn to have problems. Ancient theory concentrated on character. That was replaced by theory emphasizing conduct; either the act or the consequences of the act. At the time of Holmes' book, 1993, the importance of character was being revived. Pojman (1999) agrees that virtue ethics has reemerged as a major ethical theory. The three systems for applying ethical theory reviewed all stress the complexity of ethical analysis. They all require analyzing a situation from different domains. Even after doing that analysis, there still may not be an obvious answer. The most difficult decisions occur when ethical principles conflict with each other.

The third fact is that ethics concentrates on individual decision making. No specific references to organizational or group decision making were found. Pojman (1999) feels that morality can guide actions and produce virtuous people who then can create flourishing communities. The three systems for applying ethical theory all concentrate on an individual making the decision. The implication is that ethical people will make ethical organizations.

The second research question asks if any practical tools are available for applying ethical theory. Research found three systems that can be used to apply ethical theory. While they have much potential, it is necessary to recognize some basic limitations. They all require an understanding of basic ethical theory to use well. In addition, they all recognize that people will

be using these tools. People have that ability to reason, but they also have the ability manipulate and rationalize. “Many people pursuing worthy goals do not search diligently enough for acceptable ways of achieving them. Ethical ways are available – though they may be less convenient and more costly” (Josephson Institute, 2001).

The three systems have many components in common. The first step is careful definition of the problem. Information is gathered, being careful to separate real facts from assumptions and opinions. The stakeholders, all the persons affected, are identified. Alternative decisions need to be developed. Three alternatives is the accepted minimum. This is in line with Aristotle’s idea of the “mean”. “In the various situations in which we are called on to make practical decisions, we can distinguish two extremes and a mean between them. We must hit the mean to act rightly” (Holmes, 1993, p. 74). The alternatives need to be carefully evaluated to determine all possible outcomes and how the stakeholders are affected by these outcomes.

The systems differ in how to use the information gained from evaluating alternatives. Bivins (2000) feels that looking at the issue from many angles brings ethical dilemmas into perspective and gives the decision maker the information to reason through them. Ethos System (1999) tries to determine the best alternative under each ethical theory. The decision maker then uses that information to make the final decision. The Josephson Institute (2001) has a different approach in that it has a hierarchy of decision making. The decision maker makes the decision using the first principle whenever possible. The second and third principles are only used to resolve conflicts in values.

The third research question asks how the fire service is currently dealing with ethical issues. The research shows that ethics is an important issue in the fire service. The fire service

writers all perceive problems and a need to address those problems. They differ widely in how they approach the issue and what they consider important. A comparison of papers shows the differences.

Most writers look for a legalistic solution to ethical problems. They feel that there are principles and/or rules that can be set up for people to follow. Glass (1999), Sharp (1998), Moran (1998), Richard (1998), and Wolford (1998) all feel that the answer to ethical problems is in some type of code of conduct or ethics. Glass (1999) was specific in stating that a code of ethics would provide the same acceptable results that standard operating procedures and guidelines do in the area of emergency response. However there may be problems relying totally on a code of ethics or behavior. Wolford (1998) recognizes that determining proper conduct in complex cases requires more than just a code of conduct. Ayers (1998) cautions that ethical guidelines are highly subjective. Their concerns are supported by Holmes (1993) stating that it can be difficult applying principles and rules to specific situations.

The authors differ on the importance of character. French (1999) feels that character development is most important. Sharp (1998) feels that that a code can help people make good choices but not necessarily make them into ethical people. Moran (1999) is very specific in stating that upper level management must be ethical in their actions. Wolford (1998) expands on that idea. His paper deals with specific problems in his department. A major theme in his paper is that when the actions of top level decision makers are perceived as unethical there is an ongoing negative impact.

Peterson (2000), in his article on using turnout gear for protection during a chemical attack, demonstrates the complexity of ethical evaluation. He makes it clear that fire service must

be directly concerned with ethical issues. He describes the difficulty of resolving the moral dilemmas caused by competing needs of responding firefighters and victims. His article shows how decision makers, presumably of good character, can make totally different choices based on the same information. Faced with the same chemical threats and subject to the same laws, regulations, and standards, the decisions of eight fire departments are different. These results support the ideas presented earlier concerning the relationship of law and morality; ethics runs deeper in the essence of society than law (Pojman, 1999) and ethical people often do more than required but less than allowed (Josephson Institute, 2001).

Information directly referencing organizational decision making was not found. The information and the practical tools found are concerned with individual decision making. However, it should be possible to design a system that an organization could use that raises “red flags” to draw attention to areas of possible ethical problems. This system would be designed around a fairly simple checklist that would be part of the record of an organizational decision making process. This checklist, called an Ethical Assessment Form, would bring to light areas of concern based upon ethical theories and principles. This Ethical Assessment Form combines ideas from the Josephson Institute “Five Steps of Principled Reasoning” with ideas from Bivins’ Ethical Worksheet. The Ethical Assessment Form is shown in Appendix B. The Ethical Assessment Form is expected to evolve as experience is gained using it. The first section, Procedural Considerations, is fairly complete. The second section is concerned with ethical evaluation of alternative courses of action. Experience with using the form will be necessary to develop a final format of that section. At this time I recommend a system such as Bivins’ Ethical Worksheet, #6, as a tool for ethical evaluation of individual alternatives.

## DISCUSSION

General agreement exists that ethical behavior is an important issue in the fire service. Failure to act in an ethical manner can cause problems. Examples found in the EFOP papers include internal departmental problems (Wolford, 1998; Moran, 1998), affecting the level of public trust (Richard, 1998), and affecting how we treat patients and fellow employees (Ayers, 1998). However, agreement on the problem is not carried forward to agreement on the solution.

The fire service authors of the EFOP papers come up with a variety of conclusions and recommendations. Ayers (1998) finds ethical guidelines to be highly subjective and open to interpretation. Glass (1999), Sharp (1998), and Moran (1998) feel that a code of ethics can provide the guidelines to make good decisions. Wolford (1998) recommends a code of ethics, but also warns of the difficulty of establishing what proper conduct should be in complex cases. The role of character is also approached differently. French (1999) recommends training that provides character development of individuals. Sharp (1998) feels that a code of conduct should have a goal of making good decisions, not making people ethical. It appears that each author, consciously or not, generally subscribes to a particular ethical theory and makes decisions accordingly.

Most of the fire service authors support some type of code of ethics or behavior. Sole reliance on this method needs to be carefully considered because it may not handle the difficult situations where ethics may be most important. Holmes (1993) is very clear that there are practical problems applying codes of conduct, whether written as general principles or specific rules, to particular situations.

Peterson (2002) writes about the use of turnout gear as protection against chemical



attacks. This article presents several examples of how ethical issues can be intertwined in decision making. One example concerns different organizations having conflicting philosophies. In this case there is concern that the military, under the traditional military concept of acceptable casualties, could make recommendations that would not meet with fire service standard of no injuries. Peterson feels that risk is offset by the full participation of the fire service in the process. Another example is that while the military recommendations have a scientific basis, they also conflict with established laws, rules, and standards. Accepting the military recommendations requires fire departments making a value judgment that the expected benefits outweigh the risks of going contrary to established procedures. This last example is possibly the most important from an ethical point of view. Peterson shows that even when faced with the same problem, information, laws, rules, and standards, decision makers in different departments can reach totally different conclusions and make different decisions.

This study provided me with a number of insights concerning the application of ethical theories. Ethical behavior is important, but is hard to define. The effort to define ethical behavior turns into dealing with the question, ethical behavior based upon what? The process becomes one of evaluating values and making judgments as to which values are more important. Ethical theories have been developed that look at behavior from all viewpoints, but none is totally adequate. Each theory has validity, but also has limitations.

The nature of ethical theories, valid, but with limitations, gives a clue as how to proceed: use aspects of the different theories. Avoid the temptation to meld them into one theory, but use each theory where it is most valid. Make your decisions after evaluating proposed actions from the viewpoints of different ethical theories. Two major ways exist to make this evaluation. The

first way is to evaluate each proposed action against the different ethical theories. This evaluation will expose dilemmas associated with any proposed action. The decision maker then can reason through those dilemmas. This method is used by Bivins (2000) and the Ethos System (1999) computer program. The second way is to use ethical theories in a hierarchy. The decision maker follows one theory until a dilemma that theory can not handle is reached. The decision maker then switches to another theory and follows the new theory until a new dilemma is reached. The specific theories selected and the order in which they are used becomes very important. The Josephson Institute (2001) model for decision making uses this second method.

Both methods have advantages. Because it evaluates a proposed alternative against all the major ethical theories, the first method produces more information on why an alternative may be considered ethical or not. This may be of advantage for the organizational decision maker needing to build understanding and support. The advantage of the second method is that it focuses the decision making process. The hierarchy of ethical theories takes advantage of the strongest points of different theories at the appropriate time in the decision making process. Only the most difficult decisions need to go through the whole process. I recommend that an individual consider use of Josephson Institute (2001) model for personal use. However, my recommendation for an organization is different.

Organizational decision making seems different from individual decision making. I do not believe that a specific method, such as the Josephson Institute (2001) model, which directs the decision making process, can be forced on an organization. However, an organization can be led to use a review process. This idea led to development of the Ethical Assessment Form. This form would guide the organization through the decision making process from an ethical analysis

point of view. The form would warn of possible ethical problems in the process. The decision is not made by the form, but the process of following the form should make for better informed decisions. In addition the Ethical Assessment Form can become documentation of the process. The Peterson (2002) article on using turnout gear shows that different fire departments can make totally different decisions when faced with the same problem. What is missing for the fire service is a specific record of the assessments they made and the ethical choices they made when faced with dilemmas. The use of a common form would have provided valuable information, specifically concerning how choices were made when faced with ethical conflicts.

The MFD would benefit from the use of the Ethical Assessment Form on all policy level decisions. I do not believe that unethical decisions are being made by the department. However, problems occur with understanding and accepting decisions. Having done this research, I believe much of this comes from the different values and ethical viewpoints of the different stakeholders. This is especially important in situations, such as the anthrax attacks, where the department is faced with the need to make decisions with very little information. In all those decisions, use of the Ethical Assessment Form would provide an open record for all the stakeholders and allow people to understand what information was used in making a decision.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The first recommendation is that the MFD adopt the use of the Ethical Assessment Form for all policy level decisions. As the policy maker for the department, the Fire Chief will use the form whenever a new policy is made or an old policy has significant changes. It can also be used during other decisions. Using the form will structure the decision making process, ensure that critical steps are not missed, maximize participation in the process, and provide a record of the

process. The end result should be decisions that are better understood and accepted by the stakeholders. The form should be carefully evaluated after each use and updated as necessary.

The second recommendation is that education in basic ethical theory be provided to the department. Too many conflicts occur because people are functioning under different ethical theories. There are many different ways to consider the ethical aspects of actions. However, most people act, consciously or not, according to one ethical theory. They consider that theory to be the only one and are not even aware of other possibilities. This education would raise awareness and understanding.

The third recommendation is that follow-up studies be made to focus on organizational ethical decision making. This author feels that there may be significant differences between individual and organizational processes. There is a need to determine if differences exist and, if so, what is the impact on the fire service of those differences.

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**Appendix A**

Ethical Worksheet

Permission to Use



## Ethical Worksheet

1. What is the ethical issue/problem? (Define in one or two sentences.)
2. What immediate facts have the most bearing on the ethical decision you must render in this case? Include in this list any potential economic, social, or political pressures.
3. Who are the claimants in this issue and in what way are you obligated to each of them? (List all affected by your decision.)

Define your claimants based on the following obligations:

- a promise/contract you made (implied or express)? (Fidelity)
- a wrong you committed that you now have to make up? (Reparation)
- gratitude for something one of the claimants did for you? (Gratitude)
- the merit of the claimants when compared with each other? (Justice)
- your ability to help someone out who needs and deserves help? (Beneficence)
- your ability to avoid harming anyone unnecessarily? (Non-injury)

4. What do you think each of these claimants would prefer that you do regarding this issue?
5. List at least 3 alternative courses of action. For each alternative, ask the following questions :

- What are the best- and worse-case scenarios if you choose this alternative?
- Will anyone be harmed if this alternative is chosen, and how will they be harmed?
- Would honoring any ideal/value (personal, professional, religious, or other) invalidate the chosen alternative or call it into question?
- Are there any rules or principles (legal, professional, organizational, or other) that automatically invalidate this alternative?

6. Consider the following ethical guidelines and ask yourself whether they either support or reject any of your alternatives?

Guidelines based on consequences:

- Is the "good" brought about by your action outweighed by the potential harm that might be done to anyone? (Mills' Harm Principle)
- Is any of the harm brought about by anyone other than the moral agent? (Causal Harm)
- Will anyone be harmed who could be said to be defenseless? (Paternalism)

To what degree is your choice of alternatives based on your own or your organization's best interests? (Ethical Egoism)

Which of the alternatives will generate the greatest benefit (or the least amount of harm) for the greatest number of people? (Utilitarianism)

Guidelines based on the action itself:

Are you willing to make your decision a rule or policy that you and others in your situation can follow in similar situations in the future? (Kant)

Have you or will you be using any person as a means to an end without consideration for his/her basic integrity? (Kant)

Is the intent of this action free from vested interested interest or ulterior motive? (Kant's "good will")

Describe the character of a person adopting this alternative, if possible by attributing a positive virtue juxtaposed with its negative counterpart. For example, can an "efficient" character also be viewed by some as an "emotionless" character? How would you reconcile any conflicts in perception?

Are you choosing the alternative that demonstrates a genuine concern for others affected by your decision and/or are you responding to a perceived need? (Ethic of Care)

7. Determine a course of action based on your analysis.

8. Defend your decision in the form of a letter addressed to your most adamant detractor.

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**From:** Tom Bivins <tbivins@ballmer.uoregon.edu>  
**To:** 'GESUALDO SCHNEIDER ' <GSCHNEID@montpelier-vt.org>  
**Date:** 5/7/02 11:37AM  
**Subject:** RE: Permission to use Ethical Worksheet

Please use as much of the worksheet as you need. I only ask that my name appear on it as the author.

Good luck with your project.

Tom Bivins

-----Original Message-----

From: GESUALDO SCHNEIDER  
To: tbivins@OREGON.UOREGON.EDU  
Sent: 5/7/02 7:17 AM  
Subject: Permission to use Ethical Worksheet

Tom Bivins,

I am the Deputy Fire Chief in Montpelier Vermont. I am doing an Applied Research Paper for the National Fire Academy. The paper problem and purpose are:

The problem is that moral dilemmas can occur when the MFD is required to make decisions affecting internal and external groups that have conflicting and/or competing needs and the MFD does not have an ethics based evaluation system to provide guidance in dealing with those dilemmas.

The purpose of this report is to identify the components of an ethics based evaluation system that could assist the MFD in resolving moral dilemmas encountered during the decision making process.

I located your Ethical Worksheet and Commentary on the Internet. Because they directly relate to my purpose I plan to reference them. If it is appropriate, do I have permission to use the full worksheet or should I limit my references.

Thank you for your attention.

Gesualdo Schneider

## **Appendix B**

### Ethical Assessment Form

## ETHICAL ASSESSMENT FORM

### Section 1: Procedural Considerations

These procedural considerations have been derived from researching different ethical theories and writings. Adhering to these guidelines will increase the chances that an ethical decision will be made. If one of the steps listed here is not done it is important to note the reason. Failure to follow these steps, especially without a clearly stated reason, should raise a warning.

1. Problem Statement. Concise statement of the problem is written down.
2. Purpose Statement. The objective(s) or goal(s) of this decision is written down.
3. The stakeholders of this decision have been identified.
4. The stakeholders have the opportunity to participate in the process.
5. A minimum of three ethically justifiable alternatives have been developed.
6. Each alternative has been evaluated against ethical theories. See Section 2.
7. Select one of the evaluated alternatives.
8. List the expected consequences. This should include both the good and bad consequences.
9. Develop a plan to implement the decision.
10. Develop the plan to monitor the implementation. Benchmarks should be decided on in advance which will trigger reconsideration of the decision.

### Section 2: Ethical Evaluation of Each Alternative.

This section is not complete at this time. At a minimum each alternative should be evaluated as follows.

1. List the expected consequences, good and bad

2. List the possible “worst case” consequences
3. List the possible “best case” consequences
4. List the benefit(s) to each stakeholder
5. List the burden(s) to each stakeholder
6. List the risk each stakeholder assumes
7. Does this action violate any rules or requirements (legal, professional, organizational, etc)
8. Does this action violate established ideals/values (ethical, religious, professional, etc)

It would be advantageous to further evaluate each alternative using a tool such as Section #6 of Bivins’ Ethical Worksheet. This would provide valuable insight into why a particular ethical theory may support or reject a particular action.

Gesualdo C Schneider, 2002.